

Marketing Affordable Assisted Living



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Table of Contents

External Marketing	Page
Identifying Key Referral Sources.....	4
Visit Local DHS, AAA & PHA Offices.....	9
Open Houses/Grand Openings.....	10
Lead Cards.....	10
Conduct High Impact Tours.....	12
Conducting Assessments.....	15
Advertising.....	16
Internal Marketing	
Understand Your Market.....	17
Welcome Baskets.....	18
Note to the Physician.....	19
Note to the Pastor.....	19
Celebrate Birthdays.....	19
Build a Stellar Activities Program.....	20
Hold Resident, Food and Family Councils.....	21
Communicate Effectively	22
Allow Residents to Personalize Space.....	23
Maintain an Accurate Wait List.....	24
Summary.....	25
Attachments	
“A” – Lead Card	26
“B” – Eligibility Determination Worksheet	28
“C” – Sample Open House Press Release	31

External Marketing

Assisted living is the “new kid” in the health care continuum. Many health care professionals have little to no understanding of what types of services can be provided in assisted living. When assisted living (AL) residents require hospitalization, due to fractures or exacerbation of chronic illnesses or conditions, the physician will sometimes write an order to discharge the resident to a nursing home. Yet many frail seniors can be cared for in assisted living, where they experience a much higher degree of independence, privacy, and autonomy.

The primary approach to constructing quality affordable assisted living (AAL) programs, while keeping rents affordable, is to reduce the financing costs. A typical market rate program has a mortgage of 70 to 90 percent of the total development cost. Rents set at levels to cover the principle and interest payments are well above what is affordable to elders with incomes at or below 50 percent of area median income. Affordable assisted living developments must access a combination of grants, low-interest or forgivable loans and/or additional equity through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program to reduce the conventional mortgage to 50 percent or below of total development cost. This blend of public and private financing allows affordable assisted living providers to keep rents at a level that will qualify low income seniors for rent subsidy programs.

One of the greatest challenges of market rate assisted living providers is to develop marketing strategies that allow them to generate sufficient revenue to pay the heavy debt they incurred during the development and construction of their program. It is sometimes difficult for these programs to develop a strategy that helps them to maintain sufficient occupancy levels without appearing aggressive and profit oriented. Lower income citizens may tour the program and leave very disappointed that they do not have sufficient resources to afford a market rate assisted living unit.

Because affordable assisted living developers are able to contain costs, smaller profit margins are required to keep the program solvent. AAL providers are, in essence, providing a much needed service to low income seniors in their communities. It's much easier to market a product from the public service angle than from a profit-oriented standpoint. The challenge of AAL providers is to find ways to increase awareness of the availability of affordable assisted living to low income seniors and the health care professionals who serve them.

The following information is provided to assist AAL providers in identifying key stakeholders and creating an effective marketing strategy to ensure that low income seniors and the organizations and health care professionals who serve them are aware of this new and exciting option.

1. Identify Key Referral Sources

When assisted living (AL) residents require hospitalization, due to fractures or exacerbation of chronic illnesses or conditions, the physician will sometimes write an order to discharge the resident to a nursing home. Yet many frail seniors can be cared for in assisted living, where they experience a much higher degree of independence, privacy, and autonomy. Physicians are but one group of health care providers who lack a basic understanding of what types of individuals are appropriate for assisted living.

Identifying key referrals sources in your community is a critical component in efforts to effectively market your affordable assisted living program. While many social workers and discharge planners are gaining an understanding of the capabilities of assisted living providers, others will automatically assume that all assisted living programs are market rate, available only to clients with an ability to pay entirely with their own funds.

Health care is sold primarily by word of mouth, making it imperative that AL providers build reciprocal, professional relationships, built on trust and mutual respect. Each group of health care professionals has a different relationship with seniors, and strategies to educate and build trust with each group must be very focused and individualized. Listed below you will find key referrals sources for your affordable assisted living program. Effective marketing efforts should include a strategy to build relationships with the following individuals and organizations.



Physicians

Most physicians completed their medical training before assisted living was a long-term care option for Iowa seniors, and they have little to no understanding of where assisted living fits in the health care continuum. Physicians are trained to measure success and failures by clinical outcomes. Incorporate some of the following suggestions into a plan to educate and build relationships with area physicians who care for seniors:

- Ask the program's R.N. to develop three case studies of residents who have successfully transitioned from a higher level of care (i.e. nursing home) to the assisted living environment. Choose residents whose physical and/or mental condition dramatically improved in an environment that supports independence, dignity, and autonomy.
- Be respectful of the demands on a physician's time, and schedule appointments well in advance. Many times small physician offices will allow outsiders in to provide lunch and education on a service or product. Always take "trinkets" (i.e., magnets, pens, sticky pads) with program logos, brochures, and any other relevant educational tools and marketing information.

- Invite physicians to drop by for a tour of your facility at their convenience.
- When a new resident is admitted, identify their primary care physician and send a note advising that the resident is now in your program and that you would like to drop by for just a few minutes and talk about the resident's medical history and health care needs. A picture of the resident enjoying activities reaffirms that the adjustment has been a success. Having the nurse accompany the resident to appointments on an occasional basis is also a good way to build one-on-one relationships with physicians.



Social Workers & Discharge Planners

Individuals involved in discharge planning from hospitals and nursing homes are perhaps the most critical target audience for external marketing efforts. While this group of health care professionals is gradually gaining a better understanding of services available in assisted living, they may have no understanding of the role affordable assisted living programs play in caring for lower income seniors. Many hospitals do not allow organizations to approach social workers in their office, making it difficult to build one-on-one relationships. The following marketing techniques can be effective in building relationships with this group of individuals.

- Plan a luncheon for national social worker's month in March. Invite all area social workers and discharge planners for a lunch and tour of your facility. Be sure and have invitees RSVP in order to control the cost of your event. Have plenty of printed information on hand, including magnets, pens and notepads with your logo and contact information. Conduct a tour before lunch. Schedule a ten-minute session before lunch to talk about resident eligibility requirements. Collect business cards and ask for an appointment to visit social workers in their office one-on-one (if policy allows) to talk in greater depth about the services you offer.
- Always reward referrals with a gift. If the resident is not appropriate or not admitted, send an e-mail or thank you note. If the resident is admitted to your facility, send a personalized goody basket. Coffee mugs with the company logo make a great gift when filled with candy, hot chocolate packets, and company pens and sticky notes.
- Ask the chief of the social work department at your local hospital for permission to conduct a one-hour lunch and learn educational session for social workers and discharge planners. "Sell" the presentation as an educational session about affordable assisted living. If social workers perceive the presentation is an infomercial about your program, they will be less likely to attend. Invite attendees to stop by for a tour at their convenience.

- Identify the social workers in all skilled and rehabilitation units in your area. When patients complete a rehabilitation program following a fall or acute illness, they often times cannot return home. Social workers and discharge planners cannot suggest your program to lower income clients if they don't know you exist. Many times this individual can serve as an advocate for you if the physician is inclined to send the patient to a nursing home.



Other Assisted Living Programs

One of the most mutually beneficial relationships AL providers can build is with another AL provider. This is especially critical for affordable assisted living providers. The market rate program across town will undoubtedly have clients who spend down to the point that they can no longer afford to stay. Likewise, the affordable assisted living provider will have clients who tour who exceed income limits for the program. Use the following tips to build relationships with AL programs in your area.

- Invite the director and R.N. for lunch and a tour of your facility. People tend to recommend you to clients if they know who you are and what you look like, and they are comfortable that the program has competent, caring leadership.
- Offer to host networking meetings for long-term care professionals in your area. The role of director can leave health care professionals feeling isolated, because there is no one at their level of the organization with whom to share concerns or issues. Building a personal relationship with directors of other health care programs will be a great advantage in your efforts to market your program.

Senior Housing Providers



Identify all senior housing providers in your county and ask to visit with them personally about the programs and services you offer. Focus first on housing programs for low income seniors, but do not discount market rate programs. Many seniors may be barely able to pay for a market rate senior apartment, but as health care needs increase, they would not be able to afford a market rate assisted living unit. You will have seniors express interest in your affordable assisted living program whose health care needs are not sufficient to qualify them for the HCBS waiver. These individuals might be well served by accessing some intermittent home health services in a senior complex. As with all health care providers, sell the senior housing staff on the benefits of building a reciprocal relationship.



Nursing Homes, Hospitals & Home Health Agencies

Building relationships with all health care providers who work with seniors will enhance your marketing efforts. Some providers assume that home health agencies will not be interested in their services

because they see them as competition. However, home health care providers develop incredibly close relationships with clients, and they are often times the first to identify that a senior is requiring a higher level of service. Home health care agencies cannot provide the 24-hour oversight available in assisted living. Reputable home health agencies do not want to keep a resident in the home when it is no longer safe for them to be there. Use the following strategies to build relationships with nursing homes, hospitals, and home health providers.

- Host a luncheon for area hospital, nursing home and home health agency directors and social workers. Provide a tour and use the opportunity to educate them on the differences between market rate AL programs and affordable AL programs.
- Take a goody basket with company trinkets to every hospital, nursing home and home health agency director in your area. Respect the director's time by calling ahead for an appointment. Always exchange business cards and assure the other provider that you are interested in building a reciprocal relationship. You may have a client that needs additional services for a short period of time that could be provided by a home health agency. It is quite likely that families will ask you to recommend a skilled care provider when one of your residents is recovering from a fracture and requires skilled care. Assure the nursing home that you will send clients who need skilled care their way. Also remind them that one of the two reasons the majority of residents leave assisted living is transfer to a nursing home, and assure them that you will be happy to put in a good word for them when families are seeking a higher level of care than you can provide.
- When you have a resident who is admitted for skilled care, program staff should make frequent visits to the hospital or nursing home to check the progress of the resident. Have residents sign a get well card, and take a box of homemade cookies from your kitchen. Print a "Come Home Soon" sticker for the cookie box or sack that contains your company logo. Homemade cookies usually generate conversation, and your logo will be seen by all who visit. More importantly, you are reassuring the resident that you are truly concerned about their health and well being, and that their friends "back home" miss them and wish them well. If you have residents who are able to get out, take a small group with you to visit. There's nothing that cheers the soul of a hospitalized resident like a visit from friends.
- When a resident is hospitalized, ensure that the nurse is in close contact with the discharge planner. Because there is a lack of understanding about the services that can be provided in assisted living, physicians will sometimes automatically assume that a resident who has suffered a hip fracture is nursing home bound following rehabilitation. The nurse can reassure hospital or nursing home staff that your program is more than capable of caring for the resident who has completed rehabilitation, as

long as they meet minimum admission and occupancy criteria for your assisted living program.



Congregate meal sites & community centers

For many low income seniors, community centers are a social focal point. Congregate meal sites usually support the clientele that meet income eligibility guidelines for affordable assisted living programs.

Use the following opportunities to connect with seniors who frequent congregate meal sites and community centers.

- Ask the program director if you can bring dessert after a congregate meal. Advise them that you will be bringing brochures and would like the opportunity to talk either formally for a brief time or informally with seniors about your programs and services.
- Choose a time when you can reach the greatest number of seniors (i.e., mid-morning) and take ice cream bars. Take plenty of trinkets and brochures and offer to field questions either in a group or on a one-to-one basis.
- Seek permission to place a brochure or printed placemat on each meal tray. Use your creative juices to make the materials eye-catching and appealing. Include a cut-out coupon to stop by for a tour and a free cup of coffee and a cookie. Seek permission to use photographs of current residents. Seniors will enjoy seeing the faces of people they know, and it serves as a testimonial for your program.



Health fairs and senior days

Health fairs are an excellent way to promote your program. Connect with local shopping centers or pharmacies and seek permission to conduct periodic free blood pressure screens. The nurse can conduct blood pressure screens, and the director can visit with seniors about the services your program has to offer. Take plenty of pens and sticky notes. Never underestimate the good will that can be generated by two committed, caring health care professionals taking time out of their busy schedules to connect with seniors in the community.



Visit local churches

Visit with pastors or secretaries at local churches to identify opportunities to speak with seniors about your program. Many churches sponsor Bible studies and/or potlucks for seniors. Ask permission to bring cookies and visit with members about your program. Seek permission to put brochures in church bulletins. Some large churches offer educational presentations to parishioners. If the church offers educational sessions, ask permission to bring dessert and information about your program. Don't forget the pens and note pads.



Leave brochures at businesses frequented by seniors

- **Beauty salons**
- **Pharmacies**
- **Grocery store delis**
- **Estate planners and attorneys specializing in senior issues**
- **Funeral homes:** You may be tempted to ask yourself if it might be “too late” if you need to visit the funeral home. Consider that many frail and ill seniors have a spouse who is taking care of them. When that caregiver passes away unexpectedly, the spouse left behind may have health care needs that can no longer be met at home. Funeral directors spend a considerable amount of time with families during their time of grief, and may be in a position to suggest health care options to the family. On the flip side, you may have a resident who moves in to your program who asks you to recommend a funeral home when completing the admission work-up. In your search for reciprocal relationships, don’t overlook funeral home directors.



Allied health care providers

Seniors access a wide variety of health care services. As time permits, make personal contacts with the following health care providers:

- Physical therapists
- Occupational therapists
- Speech therapists
- Hearing aid centers
- Durable medical equipment suppliers
- Podiatrists
- Chiropractors
- Ophthalmologists & Optometrists
- Dentists

2. Visit your local DHS, Area Agency on Aging, and PHA offices



Because affordable assisted living is a new concept, you may find that employees at local government offices are unaware of what role their agency plays in your efforts to deliver services to seniors. Efforts to build professional relationships with key individuals in these organizations will be time well spent. It will enhance your professional image, while building trust and good will with these important care delivery partners. Affordable assisted living programs that have been most successful have been very skilled at building collaborative relationships in the community.

3. Open houses/grand openings



Marketing efforts should begin as soon as your program is under construction. Ideally, your program will have a significant number of individuals on a wait list prior to scheduled opening. As the time for completion of construction nears, begin to consider the following marketing efforts to ensure a successful open house and/or grand opening:

- **Advertisements:** Find every available free advertisement opportunity. This might include posting on bulletin boards at local stores and businesses, announcements in church bulletins, and brochures posted in pharmacies and other businesses frequented by seniors. Ask older friends and family members what publications they think seniors read most and purchase ads in those publications. Find free local entertainment to perform throughout the open house. Quiet background music provided by a harpist, guitarist or pianist make a lovely back drop that allows conversation to continue. Always advertise that you will be providing free refreshments.
- **Press release:** Approximately one week prior to your open house, send a press release (see sample labeled as Attachment “C”) announcing your grand opening/open house. Provide a brief explanation of the unique capabilities of affordable assisted living programs to care for lower income seniors in a beautiful environment that affords them a high level of independence.
- **Staffing:** Ensure that you have ample staff during your open house. Allow attendees the opportunity to “wander” or the option to take a formal tour. Contain formal tours to groups of four to six. This allows the staff member conducting the tour to answer questions while keeping the tour moving.

4. Lead Cards: The lifeblood of marketing efforts



Every call, every personal contact, every tour is a potential admission for your program. Developing a good system to track leads is central to organized marketing efforts. All staff should be trained on how to answer calls and gather information from prospects. Many of the calls your program receives will be from a family member, most generally an adult child scoping out information for a parent who may be in need of services. The staff member taking the call should gather all pertinent information so both parties can determine if your program would be a good fit.

- **Incorporate lead cards into orientation:** Make fielding calls and completing lead cards part of your program’s orientation program. A

segment dedicated to telephone etiquette and building rapport with the caller will be helpful to new employees. Consider giving employees small bonuses if they can convert a phone call to a tour and if they can convert a tour to an admission. This gives employees an additional incentive to do a great job of selling your program.

- **Access lead cards frequently:** Reproduce lead cards on card stock so that they are sturdy. If used appropriately, they should be handled frequently. File cards in a three-ringed binder in a location that is accessible to all staff. If a prospect calls or comes in and has previously made contact, staff should be able to pull up the lead card and capture the pertinent information already gathered. This gives the appearance that the contact mattered, and that staff have a working knowledge of the prospect's lifestyle and health care issues.
- **Use cards for data analysis:** The lead cards can provide the added benefit of helping you to identify your peak call and tour times and days. If 90 percent of your tours are conducted on Saturdays, it might be beneficial to consider having the nurse or director available for a portion of the day on Saturdays. If the lead cards show that the majority of your calls come in after 4 p.m., you may want to spend extra time and effort to ensure that the evening shift is proficient and comfortable describing your program, obtaining necessary information and in properly completing the lead card. Determine which employees seem to have the greatest success in converting calls to tours and have them demonstrate their techniques for other staff members. Check to be sure that follow-up is occurring after information packets are mailed out and that the director has been made aware of every call and tour. The lead cards can give you a wealth of valuable information that you can utilize to enhance your marketing efforts. It also gives you names and addresses to build a database of interested parties for future marketing and promotional efforts.
- **Follow-up on all leads:** You may want to categorize your lead cards in such groups as "hot leads," "cold leads," and "inactive." Do not inactivate a lead card until the prospect asks to be taken off your list, or a family advises that they have passed away or chosen another provider. Send a postcard or make a call on a monthly basis to all active leads to let them know about exciting future events and that you value their interest in your program. You may use your lead card database to advertise special promotions designed to generate traffic. For instance, you might want to offer a scoop of homemade ice cream during national ice cream month, a free daffodil to celebrate spring, or a seminar on a topic of interest to seniors.
- **Secret shop yourself:** Have friends, family members or trusted business colleagues call in to your building and pose as the son or daughter of a potential client. Develop criteria by which the caller can rate the employee fielding the call. Such criteria might include:

- ✓ Call answered in a timely manner
- ✓ Overall demeanor (i.e., friendly, willing to help, not rushed or abrasive)
- ✓ Took all demographic information (name, phone number, etc.)
- ✓ Asked appropriate questions
- ✓ Asked the caller to describe her mother's current situation
- ✓ Listened intently as the caller provides information
- ✓ Described the program and services in a very positive manner
- ✓ Asked questions regarding care needs and financial status
- ✓ Invited the caller to come in for a tour
- ✓ Offered to send an information packet
- ✓ End the call on a positive note and made the caller want to see the program

5. Conduct high impact tours



When a prospect enters your building, you are presented with an opportunity to show off your program and your caring, committed staff members. Fearing they are about to be bombarded by a hard sell, prospects and their family members will sometimes go overboard in their efforts to convince you that they are “just looking.” In reality, the decision to move from one's home is not made lightly, and if the visitor is beginning to look, it probably means there are significant issues already. Reassure the prospect and/or family members that you understand they are facing a difficult decision. Your job is not to pressure them to come live with you—it is to make them feel comfortable with you, to make them see how beautiful your home is, and to leave them with the sense that, when the time is right, your place is the only place they want to live.

The following tips will help you conduct successful tours.

- **Conduct “curb checks.”** Encourage all staff members to drive and walk in front of the building to determine if everything is in place and your building has great curb appeal. Welcome signs and potted plants at the front door are very inviting and homelike. The Director should choose a different entrance every time he/she enters the building. Visitors may inadvertently use a door that the program considers to be a staff entrance. Cigarette butts on the walk and fingerprint smears on the door do not project an inviting image. Every entrance should be appealing and inviting.
- **Be cognizant of both sights & smells.** When you come home from a long vacation, and open the back door, you become aware that your house has a distinct smell. Because we tend to grow immune to smells that we live with every day, it is beneficial to have friends or family stop by every once in awhile to reaffirm that our building not only looks good, but smells inviting and pleasant. It is best to avoid air fresheners that smell like the outdoors (i.e., pines and florals). Softer scents, such as fresh

linen, vanilla, and citrus, are more universally pleasing and do not give the impression that there is a “cover up” going on.

- **Conduct walk-around tours every day.** Walk-around tours may be conducted by the Director or delegated to a staff member. Early in the morning, scope out the entire building to ensure that floors are clean, pictures are hanging evenly, and there are no bad smells. It is also a great opportunity for residents to visit with staff.
- **Gather information first:** When a prospect or family members walk through your door for a tour, they should be greeted warmly, offered a cup of coffee, and placed in a private space (i.e., the private dining room) to wait for the staff member who will conduct the tour. Never leave a family waiting for more than five minutes. Take time to sit down and capture pertinent information about the client. Use the lead card to help paint a picture of the prospect so that you can touch on issues of importance during the tour. For instance, if the prospect is unsteady, point out the handrails on every wall, the walk-in showers, and other features that will minimize falls. If the prospect indicates they like to take a bath from time to time, get them excited about the whirlpool room and the opportunity to take a warm bubble bath. Those who enjoy crafts might want to see some projects under construction in the activity room. Understanding the needs and wants of the client prior to conducting the tour will help you frame your program positively and point out all the features that would make your home a great place to live.
- **Create a marketing box:** Every program should have a box that contains packets of information to be used when an inquiry is received. The packets should contain such items as a lead card, marketing brochures, floor plans, pricing lists, newsletters, activity calendars, and other items that paint a picture of life in your facility. Make sure there is a business card with the director’s name and phone number(s) in the packet.
- **Understand residency criteria:** All staff members must have a thorough understanding of your residency and discharge criteria. If, during the initial visit, you discover that a prospect routinely requires a two-person transfer, you should make it clear that your admission criteria (and Iowa assisted living law) do not allow you to care for clients who routinely need the assistance of two for transfer. Advise the prospect other assisted living programs will not be allowed to take them as a client, and offer them contact information for the Area Agency on Aging in your area.
- **Use visual cues.** Use visual cues to remind yourself of important features to share while conducting tours. For instance, the thermostat on the wall should remind you that each room has separate heating and cooling controls, so residents can maintain their environment at a level that is comfortable for them. Use the window in the activity room overlooking the preschool to tell people about the intergenerational activities you conduct with your young neighbors. The nurse’s office should serve as a reminder

to reinforce the quality care that you provide 24 hours a day. Use the keypad at the entrance to reinforce that you are a safe place for seniors, free from unwanted intruders.

- **Amenities vs. benefits.** One of the most effective methods of selling your program is to convince prospects of all the benefits residents enjoy. For instance, instead of just showing them the whirlpool room, talk about how a bubble bath helps to relieve tension and reduce anxiety and how whirlpools help to maintain healthy skin. The exercise room and the walking club help to maintain mobility and independence. The common spaces provide places where residents can hold a card game or host friends or family members. Opportunities for socialization decrease feelings of isolation and depression, and keeping outside relationships intact is good for self esteem.
- **Visit satisfied residents.** Seek prior permission to show the apartments of residents who enjoy living with you. It is best to choose apartments that are well kept and uncluttered. Satisfied residents are your best marketing tools. It also gives a potential resident an opportunity to connect with someone who lives with you. That gives the person touring the sense that they have already made a friend. Imagine that one of your residents asks a visitor if he or she likes to read and then advises, “Well, that’s too bad, because if you move here, you won’t have time to read. There’s too much going on!” What a great testimony to your activities program and your ability to engage residents in meaningful activities.
- **Create a sense of urgency:** While you may have many empty apartments, you don’t necessarily want prospects to know that. Choose a few apartments that you think would be most appealing, based on the needs of the client. For instance, a resident with mobility issues may want to be close to the dining room. A resident who taught school for many years might like the apartment with a view of the elementary school. Dragging prospects through every empty apartment can be exhausting, and it can create a sense that your program might not be such a great place to live if you have so many vacancies. It will also be difficult to procure a reservation check if the client goes away thinking there will be plenty of time to choose an apartment later. Prospects and family members may ask, “How many empty apartments do you have?” You can simply respond, “I have three apartments I can show you today.” Maybe the other three require some minor paint touch-up or some other minor repairs. Ethical marketing is central in efforts to build a positive image for your program. Never tell a customer a lie, but find creative ways to create a sense of urgency and sell prospects on the benefits of choosing you as their new home.
- **Wrap up is important:** End the tour where you began, back in the room where you sat with the family and gathered information. Sit down and let the family talk about the positive feelings they have and answer any questions that may arise. Offer to hold an apartment for a reservation fee.

You want to assure families that you do not intend to pressure them into a decision. On the other hand, you want to create a sense of urgency, or the feeling that the apartment mom loved may not necessarily be there in another month. The reservation check can be returned if the prospect decides not to move in, but an interest in holding an apartment tells you that he/she is very close to making a decision. The prospect should leave with a marketing packet, a business card containing phone numbers, and a floor plan of the apartments. It can be very difficult for people to visualize how a house full of furniture will fit into a one-bedroom apartment. Having a floor plan of the apartment available will help them to begin thinking about what they could bring not **if** but **when** they move in. Ask for permission to check back by phone in a week or two, just to see if they have additional questions and to get a sense of how close they are to making a final decision.

- **Teach staff to conduct effective tours.** While guests always enjoy meeting management, some of the most effective tours can be given by caring, well-spoken, dedicated staff members. Provide inservice training on conducting effective tours to all staff members. The director will not always be available, and it is unacceptable to turn a guest away because there are no staff members available who are comfortable giving a tour. Do not give up your teaching efforts until every staff member could give an effective tour if called upon, but don't be afraid to identify staff members who give really great tours and ask them to take the lead. By trusting employees to conduct tours, you are empowering them to play a part in making their business successful.
- **Offer a parting gift.** Whether the visitor commits to moving in or not, offer them a token of your appreciation for taking the time to visit. For just a dollar or two, you can put together a "thanks for popping in" basket. You can purchase small aluminum buckets or wicker baskets at department stores for around a dollar. Throw in a can of pop, a packet of microwave corn, and some lollipops. Top it off with a curly ribbon holding a "Thanks for popping in" tag, with your company logo and phone number.

6. Conducting assessments



If a prospect stops by for a tour, it's a great time to conduct the initial assessment. You can then give the individual a better idea of the actual costs they will incur, based on their level of care and the size of the apartment they choose. Make sure the prospect understands that the assessment will take some time, and do not begin the assessment unless there is plenty of time available. If the prospect does not have time but is interested in an assessment, offer to go to the home. Conducting an assessment at the prospect's home gives you valuable information about how they are living and what their functional capabilities are. Offering to conduct an assessment at the time and location of the prospect's

choosing is also great for public relations. It says you value the prospect's time and respect that they also have a schedule.

- **Home environment provides valuable information.** Most clients are aware that a higher level of service means higher costs, so they may try to convince you that their functional capabilities are greater than they actually are. Families also tend to downplay their loved one's level of disability. They are not necessarily trying to misrepresent the level of function—they just have not yet come to grips with the health decline of someone they love very much. Seeing the individual in their own home can help you better understand their capabilities.
- **Let the prospect do the talking.** You may conduct an assessment of a potential resident in the presence of a family member. Many times family members will answer questions for their mother or father. Always redirect the question back to the potential resident to answer for themselves. Family members sometimes think they “know what is best” for a loved one, but assisted living is built on the concept of promoting independence and autonomy. As health care professionals, we must support those concepts by ensuring that residents speak for themselves. You may find humor in the fact that a daughter tells you her mother likes to play cards, and the mother informs you that she only played cards because her late husband enjoyed them and she actually hates cards. It is critical for the mother to be able to express her needs honestly, and in fact, this may be the first time in her life when she has been encouraged to do so.

7. Advertising



Affordable assisted living programs do not have a huge advertising budget. But they have a great opportunity to educate the community on a very new concept in long-term care.

Communities with an affordable assisted living program are few and far between. Many small communities have a nursing home, and some have a market rate assisted living, but affordable assisted living programs are brand new. Use the soft sell technique of educating citizens about this new health care option and invite low income seniors who are in a nursing home but feel they may be appropriate for assisted living to contact you for a free assessment. If the candidate is not appropriate, leave them with your best wishes and some trinkets. Because of your willingness to conduct a free assessment, a friend or family member of that person might be your next prospect. Use the following low cost advertising options to increase awareness of your program:

- **Press releases.** Send out a press release announcing your grand opening, and try to plan an event that would spur community interest at least every six months. Send a press release approximately one week in advance announcing your upcoming event. Newspapers and radio stations in small towns will many times cover the human interest stories that go unnoticed in larger markets.

- **Host an event for the community.** Plan something special each month designed to peak the interest of both residents and their family members. Christmas parties and Easter egg hunts are obvious choices, but creativity usually sparks interest. How about inviting the preschool next door to cut out and decorate sugar cookies for Valentine's day? (Don't forget to send out a press release.) Host a craft show in the winter, or maybe an antique car show or homemade ice cream festival in your parking lot in the summer. Find creative ways to get the community to your building for a fraction of the cost of paid advertising. National Assisted Living week, held every September, is also a great opportunity for free press.
- **Spotlight residents with interesting stories.** If you have a resident who lead a fascinating life, ask your local newspaper to write a feature article. Many small market newspapers actively seek human interest stories.

Internal Marketing

Because health care is sold by word of mouth, internal marketing efforts are at least as important as external efforts, if not more so. You want your current residents and their family members to be so delighted with the care and services they receive that they heartily recommend you to friends and family. Use internal marketing to build the reputation as an exemplary health care provider in your community.

1. Understand your market



The reimbursement mechanisms for affordable assisted living can be complicated and cumbersome. Programs should develop a good assessment tool to allow them to quickly identify whether an individual expressing interest would both qualify financially and be an appropriate admission, based on occupancy criteria.

Attachment "B" shows examples of how gathering some basic information can give you a clear picture of whether your program and the prospect are a good fit.

- **Acuity Level:** Affordable assisted living programs are not designed to care for high functioning, low income seniors. There are many housing programs that offer rent subsidy to income-qualified seniors who do not need daily assistance or 24 hour a day supervision.
- **Rent Subsidy:** There are two sources of rent subsidy that can assist tenants with rent payments. Section 8 vouchers, administered through the local public housing authority, can be used to supplement rent in assisted living. Many urban areas have a long wait list for Section 8

vouchers, and some housing authorities no longer accept applications for vouchers because the wait list is so long. The Home and Community Based Elderly Waiver contains a rent subsidy component, but waiver eligible applicants may also experience a wait to access this rent subsidy program, dependent upon the number of persons accessing the waiver and funds available.

- **Services:** For qualifying residents, the primary programs that pay for care provided in assisted living are:
 - a. **Medicaid** (for individuals at SSI level {\$579 per month} or below)
 - b. **Home and Community Based Services waiver**
The two primary considerations for HCBS waiver eligibility are income/assets and level of care. Applicants for the waiver must have income below \$1,737 (three times SSI), assets of no more than \$2,000, no more than \$4,500 in automobile equity, and their home. In addition to meeting income eligibility criteria, an applicant must require assistance with three or more activities of daily living (nursing home level of care) in order to be eligible to receive HCBS waiver services. If the resident moves in to your affordable assisted living program, they will be expected to sell their house and spend down the proceeds before they will be considered eligible for the HCBS waiver from an income/asset standpoint.
- **Too many assets:** Low-income clients who qualify for the waiver based on acuity level but who exceed the asset limits should be very attractive to an affordable assisted living provider. When the resident has used assets to pay for care and has spent down to the point where they are now waiver eligible, the program can assist the resident in applying for the HCBS waiver, allowing the resident to remain in their home. Most market rate assisted living programs are not designed to care for residents who are receiving waiver services.
- **Too healthy to qualify for the waiver:** If a prospect meets the rental assistance eligibility requirement of not more than \$25,000 per year in income, but they do not qualify for waiver service because they do not need assistance with three or more activities of daily living per day, they still may be a good candidate for your program. You will need to sit down with the client and determine whether they can pay out of pocket for the services they will need, until such time as they would be eligible for waiver services due to a decline in their health status.

2. Welcome baskets



On the day of admission, deliver a spectacular welcome basket to the new resident's room. Seek prior input from family members as to the resident's likes and dislikes. For instance, decks of cards are good for solitaire players but are meaningless to those who don't

play cards. Be sure and include pens, note pads, magnets, etc., and a “Welcome Home” tag that contains your logo. Some good items to put in welcome baskets:

- Candy
- Popcorn
- Fingernail clippers
- Note pads
- Pens
- Cards
- Soaps & bath supplies

- Tissue purse packs
- Stationery items
- Lip balm
- Band-aids
- Hand lotions

3. Send a note to the physician



You will need to document the name of the resident’s primary care physician for all new residents. Ask the resident for permission to take a picture and send it in a card to the physician. Enclose a business card that shows the resident’s new address. Jot the physician a note that you may stop by to briefly discuss the resident. This is a great way to build relationships with physicians without using a “sales” approach.

4. Send a note to the pastor



It is important for residents to keep relationships intact when they move into your building. A resident’s spiritual life should not cease to exist because they left their home. Send a note to the pastor to advise that you are pleased that the resident chose to live with you and to reassure that you understand the importance of faith in that resident’s life. Solicit volunteers who might be willing to stop by on Sunday morning to pick the resident up for worship service.

5. Celebrate birthdays



When residents move in, advise them that you like to celebrate birthdays and ask permission to put them on the birthday list. Some people do not enjoy birthday celebrations, so don’t force residents to participate. But most residents will enjoy being acknowledged. Some simple suggestions for birthday celebrations:

- Celebrate all birthdays in the month with one celebration, complete with cake & punch
- Allow residents to choose their favorite meal on their birthday

- Take the resident and a friend of their choice out to lunch
- Make a happy birthday banner for the dining room and present the resident with a small cake while the group sings, “Happy Birthday”
- Invite the resident’s family in for a meal to celebrate their loved one’s birthday

6. Build a stellar activities program



The most effective internal marketing tool a program can develop is an activity program that exceeds all expectations. Use the following methods to advertise your activities program:

- Display a white board in the dining room listing the day’s activities
- Publish a monthly calendar and distribute it to both residents and family members at the beginning of the month
- Never offer less than three activities per day (four is ideal)
- Plan at least one family event per month, preferably on a weekend
- Plan at least one trip out of the building every month (i.e., shopping, movie, tour of Christmas lights)
- Send out press releases to announce special events that would be of interest to the community

Make every effort to have a wide variety of activities. Live music is always popular, but keep in mind that residents may have very different tastes. Seek frequent feedback from residents about their level of satisfaction with your activity offerings. You can contain costs by seeking volunteers to provide music or time for other activities. The following activities are usually popular with residents:

- Invite local high school girls (i.e., resident’s granddaughter) to paint fingernails
- Crafts
- Drawing and art lessons
- Sewing clubs
- Daily exercise group (i.e., throw beach balls around the circle)
- Walking club
- Lunch with the Director (take a few residents at a time out for lunch)
- Tea with the Director (invite all residents to enjoy tea and conversation with the Director)
- Intergenerational activities with local schools and preschools
- Ask school bands, choirs, and drill teams to perform for residents
- Host a fashion show
- Offer root beer floats, banana splits, homemade doughnuts, etc., to break up the afternoon
- Invite preschoolers over to cut out and decorate sugar cookies
- Dip pretzels and crackers in chocolate and white bark

- Invite citizens who have taken an exotic trip to show slides and talk about their trip (consider making an authentic meal from the country they visited)
- Invite local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts in to talk about their projects with residents
- Organize card and board games (i.e., Scrabble or poker tournament)
- Theme parties (i.e., holidays, State Fair party)
- Trivia (and other games that stimulate mental activity)
- Current events (choose interesting items from the daily newspaper or magazines)
- Popcorn & a movie night
- Live bands and musicians
- Sing-alongs (purchase music tapes that include songs from the residents' era)

7. Hold resident, food and family councils



One of the most effective ways to increase customer satisfaction is to hold monthly resident councils. The Director or delegated staff member should lead the meetings, and residents should be asked for honest feedback regarding all aspects of your program. Seek

input regarding your performance in the following areas:

- General appearance of the grounds & building
- Cleanliness of inside of building
- Housekeeping in individual rooms
- Caregiving in general (invite residents to express concerns about a specific caregiver in private)
- Laundry
- Activities
- Availability of management
- Food
- **Food satisfaction = greater overall satisfaction.** Surveyors tell providers that if residents are satisfied with food, they are generally more satisfied about everything. Because food and meal times are such an important part of residents' life, you might want to consider holding a separate food council. This time can be devoted solely to discussions about the quality of the food and dining services. Otherwise, your entire resident council time may be eaten up by discussions about food.
- **Follow-up is essential.** The Director or designee conducting resident and food council meetings should be prepared to review minutes from the previous months and report on progress made in regard to previous suggestions. Residents will find councils worthwhile only if they feel the changes they have suggested are being implemented. Offer cookies and punch at the meetings to ensure a good turnout. Challenge residents to address issues directly, through appropriate channels, rather than

commiserating with their friends and neighbors. The current generation of seniors endured many hardships growing up, and they were taught not to complain. They often times have to be encouraged and reassured that providing constructive feedback about issues that are important to them is not considered complaining.

- **Families provide great feedback.** At least once a year, host a family council meeting. Summer is a good time to hold a picnic lunch on Saturday or an evening meal on the patio. Invite family members to provide feedback from their perspectives. Family members see your program from a different perspective than residents and often times provide very insightful, helpful feedback that helps you improve programs and services. Provide updates on progress made on key items identified at the previous family council meeting. Finally, publish minutes as soon after meetings as possible. Provide every resident with a copy, and mail council minutes to families with your monthly newsletter.

8. Communicate effectively with residents & family members



The assisted living community takes on a life of its own, changing slightly with each new resident. Some residents may go days without a visitor or a trip outside your walls. If residents feel a part of your community, the days will be much more pleasant, and the quality of life will be greatly increased. But how can you foster a sense of belonging for residents and their family members? The following suggestion will strengthen relationships with residents and help family members to see and appreciate your positive impact on their loved one's life.

- **Ensure there is a management presence:** Family members often have concerns to discuss or suggestions to offer. They may share some of this information with floor staff, but they're not sure it's getting back to management. It is important for the director and/or R.N. to establish times that they will be available to families outside the normal workday. It may be something as simple as choosing one day to come in late and work late every week, or publishing a list of times for the month that the director will be available outside the normal work hours. Planning a family event in the evenings or on weekends every month also gives family members another opportunity to see management and address any issues of concern. Just be sure to communicate in writing when you will be available to family members.
- **Open your door to staff and residents.** The Director should constantly be reminding residents to stop by the office and provide immediate feedback regarding services rendered, both good and bad. If residents don't feel comfortable voicing concerns or complaints, they will turn to their neighbor, and the problem will only worsen. The best thing the Director can do for both staff and residents is to keep an open door policy and always be available to accept feedback that could help improve a

program or service. The demands on the director's time can be overwhelming. Choose certain times of the day to conduct work behind closed doors (i.e., 10 – 11:30 a.m. and 2 – 3 p.m.). Residents will respect your workload if they know you will be available to talk with them a little later.

- **Develop a quality newsletter.** It's a great way to let both family members and residents know what's been happening in your program. Use the newsletters to introduce new residents and to spotlight a special birthday or event. Have a staff member interview new residents and write a story that covers significant events in the resident's life, family members, and facts about their favorite foods, TV shows, best vacation, etc. An original article covering a current event topic, authored by the director, is a nice touch. Ask the R.N. to write an article about a health issue of interest to both seniors and their families. If you have access to a chaplain or pastor, add a faith-oriented column. Mail the newsletter to families with a copy of the activity calendar for the upcoming month and copies of any resident or family council meeting minutes. Be sure and highlight upcoming family events on the activity calendar and encourage families to participate.
- **Offer a small reward** for residents who refer friends and family members to your program. If the prospect is not admitted, send a thank you card and/or small tokens of appreciation. If the prospect is admitted, offer the resident a financial reward, such as \$100 off the amenities fee for the next month or a gift certificate to a local restaurant. Providing a reward tells the resident how much you value their recommending you to others.
- **Encourage family participation in activities.** Residents are proud of their family members and like to introduce children and grandchildren to management and the other residents. Family visits make your program feel more like a home. Develop family friendly policies that allow for family members to stay overnight on an occasional basis, either in the resident's room or a guest room. Encourage family members to bring pets to visit residents.

9. Allow residents to personalize their space.



And the first thing that comes to our mind is Bessie's apartment, filled to the rafters with quilt scraps, salt and pepper shakers, porcelain dolls, and crocheted afghans. We fight the urge to tell Bessie that her apartment is really messy and that we think about half her treasures should be thrown out. But we must remember that assisted living is about preserving autonomy, or the right to govern oneself. We must restrict our conversations to addressing only those elements that affect health and safety, such as items placed in traffic paths or food items that create an unsanitary environment. If Bessie feels more at home having all of her treasures around her, we must support her right to live as she chooses. Of course, we don't necessarily choose her apartment as one to "show off" to

guests, but who knows...maybe another collector of quilts, dolls, afghans and salt & pepper shakers might be your next prospect.

- **Name identification is optional.** Regulations require that all apartments are numbered. But adding resident names to identification plates is optional. Some programs have name plates designed to be changed easily with each change of resident. Some programs have name plates that allow enough room to display a picture, along with the resident's name. In the end, it is the resident who gets to decide how they want to identify their apartment. If a room number is all they want, then they must be allowed to make that choice.
- **Keep hallways safe.** While the resident gets to decide how they want to use the space within their apartment, you may want to set some general guidelines about decorating the doors and hallways. Some programs limit residents to one personal item on the door, such as a wreath. There are a number of good reasons for controlling the hallway decorations, including minimizing "shopping" behaviors by residents with dementia, and for ensuring that hallways are free of clutter in the event of an evacuation.

10. Maintain an accurate waiting list.



One of the greatest measures of the success of your marketing program is the length of your waiting list. If your marketing plan has been executed successfully, the day will come when you will have no immediate apartment availability. Build and maintain an accurate waiting list so that when a resident gives a 30-day notice, you already have an idea of who is ready to move into that apartment, and you will not lose revenue because an apartment sits empty for a period of time.

Many times people will pay a reservation fee and agree to be placed on the wait list just for piece of mind. Each time you call to let them know an apartment is available, they advise that they are not quite ready to move. It's a good idea to call all individuals on the wait list from time to time to determine if they are still interested, and if so, to let them know where they are on the list and how long you anticipate it might be until an apartment becomes available.

You don't want to turn away future customers because the waiting list is so long they fear they might never get in. Staying in contact with individuals on the list gives you a better idea of who is really ready to make the move and who is using their position on the list as a "security blanket." Remember that the average stay in assisted living is 18 months, so ongoing marketing efforts and waiting lists are essential in maintaining the financial health of your program.

Summary

Marketing plans can take a great deal of time and effort to develop. But without a definitive plan, providers can waste valuable time and end up with little to show for their efforts. While affordable assisted living programs have less debt to repay than market rate programs, they are not designed to remain financially solvent with a significant number of vacant units. Just as in market rate programs, the financial success of the program depends on the provider's ability to effectively market the program and maintain an acceptable level of occupancy.

Affordable assisted living providers may use some of the ideas contained in this marketing guide to create a marketing plan. However, one of the most critical pieces impacting the overall success of your program is not discussed. Hiring and retaining competent, committed employees, who feel great about their employer and the residents they serve is at the core of any good assisted living program. Residents can tell if your employees are satisfied and feel good about where they work. Satisfied employees say good things about your program to friends and family members.

Rate and discuss the quality of caregivers' clinical skills, but place just as much emphasis on teamwork and customer service skills. Performance criteria should be built around the principles of delivering high quality care and in serving the customer in a respectful, loving manner. If there are specific areas where a staff member requires additional training or education, it is the manager's responsibility to meet that need and to hold the employee accountable for improving performance.

Kee in mind that any effort to establish a marketing plan must include development of measurable goals. Track the success of your specific efforts. If visiting social workers and discharge planners has not yielded a significant number of admissions, the management team might be able to brainstorm and find more effective ways to communicate with this group, or turn efforts to more lucrative referral sources.

Efforts to market your program will be in vain if you don't delight the customers you already have. When you conduct tours, your residents will help convince prospects that there is no better place in the world to live than in your affordable assisted living program. One good testimonial from a resident is worth a thousand words from program staff. Acknowledge residents who assist in your marketing efforts with small rewards.

This marketing guide offers many options that could be included in a formal marketing plan, but the director alone cannot carry out a plan. Lay out a monthly calendar that contains a specific number of events and share it with all staff members. Staff and residents have a huge stake in the success of your program, and they should be included in an acknowledged for marketing efforts.

Name of employee:_____

Date:_____Time:_____

Name of Caller:_____

Phone Number: (home)_____(work/cell)_____

- ☐ **Call**
☐ **Tour**
☐ **E-mail**
☐ **Letter**
☐ **Other**_____

☐ Calling on behalf of self

(or)

☐ Calling on behalf of friend or relative: _____

Name
Caller's relationship to prospect

 Address of caller: _____

City
State
Zip

 Referral source: ☐ Hospital ☐ Drove by ☐ Current Resident _____
☐ Newspaper ad ☐ Yellow pages ☐ Professional _____
☐ TV ad ☐ Church ☐ Nursing home: _____

 Current living situation & issues creating a need for AL _____

What are the current capabilities of the individual in regard to:

Bathing:_____ Dressing:_____ Grooming:_____

Laundry:_____ Housekeeping:_____ Laundry:_____

Medications:_____ Incontinence Issues:_____ Meal Prep:_____

Transportation _____ Hearing _____ Visual _____

Transferring _____ Social _____ Confusion: _____

Ambulation – ☐ Ambulates independently, without assistive devices☐ Uses walker☐ Uses wheelchair☐ Uses cane☐ Uses motorized cartHCBS Elderly Waiver: ☐ Currently enrolled ☐ Applied for ☐ No status

Annual income:_____Assets:_____

Major health issues:_____

Tour scheduled: No (reason):_____ Yes (date & time):_____

Information packet sent (date):_____

(Use reverse side to document follow-up)

Follow up:

- ☐ Personal note sent by Director (date:_____)
- ☐ Tour scheduled for (date:_____)
- ☐ Follow-up call (date:_____)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Determining Eligibility for Program Worksheet

Current Prices

Monthly Rents

Apt. A = \$349

Apt. B = \$449

Apt. C = \$587

Board Fees

\$270 per month

Service Packages

Level 1 = \$585 per month

Level 2 = \$780

Level 3 = \$1,052

Name	Monthly Income	Assets	Needs
Aurelia	\$1,500	\$18,000 in the bank	Medication management Bathing Dressing Housekeeping Laundry Assessed at Level 2
Betty	\$579 (SSI)	\$500 in the bank	Bathing Dressing Housekeeping Laundry Assessed at Level 1
Gertrude	\$2,500	Farm and \$20,000 in bank	Medication management Housekeeping Laundry Help with ambulation Bathing Assessed at Level 2
Beverly	\$800	\$3,000 in bank	Medication management Housekeeping Laundry Assessed at Level 1
Rachael	\$680	\$14,000 plus \$30,000 home	Toileting Bathing Dressing Housekeeping Laundry Medication Assessed at Level 3

Aurelia

Meets annual housing income guideline (\$25,000 or less)	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of acuity level	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of income level	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of assets less than \$2,000	Yes	No

Tenant Fees**Medicaid Covers****Waiver Covers**

Rent:	_____	_____	_____
Board:	_____		
Services:	_____		

Out of Pocket \$ _____	Total _____	Total _____
------------------------	-------------	-------------

At the current out of pocket rate, how many months can the resident pay privately before assets run out? _____

Betty

Meets annual housing income guideline (\$25,000 or less)	Yes	No
Qualified for Medicaid by virtue of income	Yes	No
Qualified for Medicaid by virtue of assets less than \$2,000	Yes	No

Tenant Fees**Medicaid Covers****Waiver Covers**

Rent:	_____	_____	_____
Board:	_____		
Services:	_____		

Out of Pocket \$ _____	Total _____	Total _____
------------------------	-------------	-------------

Gertrude

Meets annual housing income guideline (\$25,000 or less)	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of acuity level	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of income level	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of assets less than \$2,000	Yes	No

Tenant Fees**Medicaid Covers****Waiver Covers**

Rent:	_____	_____	_____
Board:	_____		
Services:	_____		

Out of Pocket \$ _____	Total _____	Total _____
------------------------	-------------	-------------

Beverly

Meets annual housing income guideline (\$25,000 or less)	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of acuity level	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of income level	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of assets less than \$2,000	Yes	No

Tenant Fees**Medicaid Covers****Waiver Covers**

Rent:	_____	_____	_____
Board:	_____		
Services:	_____		

Out of Pocket \$	_____	Total	_____	Total	_____
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What suggestions can we offer this client? _____

Rachael

Meets annual housing income guideline (\$25,000 or less)	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of acuity level	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of income level	Yes	No
Qualified for Waiver Services by virtue of assets less than \$2,000	Yes	No

Tenant Fees**Medicaid Covers****Waiver Covers**

Rent:	_____	_____	_____
Board:	_____		
Services:	_____		

Out of Pocket \$	_____	Total	_____	Total	_____
------------------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

At the current out of pocket rate, how many months can the resident pay privately before assets run out? _____

Date:
Contact person:
Phone Number:

For Immediate Release

Blooming Prairie offers new health care choice for low-income seniors

When the State of Iowa began licensing assisted living programs in 1997, there was not a single program designed for the sole purpose of serving low-income Iowans. While some providers had an interest in caring for this group of individuals, the system for covering the costs of care and services in assisted living was fragmented, and reimbursement methods were cumbersome for both providers and consumers. In addition, development costs for assisted living programs were high, and providers were simply unable to offer rents that were within the reach of lower income seniors.

“Within the past three years, the state has made significant advancement in its ability to create programs that are affordable for low income seniors,” says Jenny Knust, Affordable Assisted Living Coordinator for the Iowa Finance authority (IFA). “A blend of private and public funding helps developers contain the cost of building assisted living programs, making the units more affordable to seniors who would not otherwise be able to access this health care option,” she added.

The Governor and state legislators have had a great interest in increasing the availability of affordable assisted living units, recognizing that many seniors who could not afford to pay privately for the 24 hour a day care provided in the assisted living environment were ending up in nursing homes. Many of these seniors could have their health care needs more appropriately addressed in assisted living, at a lower cost and in an environment that is structured to preserve independence, autonomy and privacy.

IFA has worked with a variety of private developers, government funding agencies, and legislators to develop pilot projects that have successfully pulled together funding sources to make affordable assisted living a reality. “The grand opening of our program is the culmination of a lot of hard work by people who are enthused about assisted living and passionate about providing that health care option to lower income Iowans,” said (administrator’s name). “We are very proud to invite the community to come see our beautiful building and meet the competent, caring staff who will provide services to qualified low income seniors in our area.”

The public is invited to attend an open house on (date) at (time). Blooming Prairie Assisted Living is located at 1990 20th Place, Nowheresville, Iowa.

For more information about the open house, eligibility criteria, or programs and services offered by Blooming Prairie Assisted Living, please contact (name) at (phone no.).